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ABSTRACT

Presented at the California Federation Conference of The Council for Exceptional Children in 1979, the paper discusses the mainstreaming of handicapped students into regular physical education classes. The need for and purpose of mainstreaming handicapped students into regular physical education classes are examined, and specific mainstreaming procedures are reviewed. Evaluation during mainstreaming is also considered. An assessment evaluation checklist and a sample physical education teacher evaluation questionnaire are appended. (DLS)

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MAINSTREAMING
OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION
PUPIL INTO
REGULAR PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Learning about movement and how to act and respond in games and sports takes place in a unique atmosphere in the public school setting. No walls and few boundaries allow the child more freedom of expression and enhance the experience of socialization. The whole individual character (physical, emotional, social and intellectual) is often brought forth in physical education classes. Here a child can be studied and evaluated more completely as to how he will respond in the real world. Accurate judgements of skill potential in social-emotional areas can be observed in this outdoor setting, more fairly and consistently than any curriculum of tests taken in a classroom.

The physical education of handicapped children is an important area to help meet the demands of mainstreaming. Physical education is the only curriculum area specifically mentioned in The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142), and for good reason. Through successes and accomplishments in physical and motor areas participants grow, develop and progress in other areas and domains. Children with handicapping conditions have the same ranges of interests and needs for active participation in physical activities as classmates without handicapping conditions. Active participation in vigorous physical activities provides basis for healthier, happier more productive fun-filled lines. As Helen Keller so aptly stated, "It is not enough to give a handicapped person life. Each must be given a life worth living". (Stein, 1979)

NEED AND PURPOSE

There is a need to introduce students with handicaps into a social educational setting where special and regular students can learn to become familiar with and acceptant of all types of individuals. Physical education classes afford this opportunity because of a classes wide range of abilities and personalities in a

NEED AND PURPOSE CONT.

fairly non-restricted environment. While learning to develop movement skills, pupils have the opportunity to increase their awareness of sportsmanship, team-manship, winning and losing. In fact, the whole of physical education is so broad that regardless of an individual's age, background, experience, abilities or disabilities, activities can be found in which each individual can succeed. All students whether handicapped or not learn by modeling their peers. In physical education this is especially true. Special education students who may have the potential to lead a more normal life need to be exposed early to others in organized games and sports where they can learn social interactions and judge all individuals for themselves. The maturing child is confronted with many psychological and social configurations that may confuse them. Children and youth learn to untangle these complexities by observing examples of the results of appropriate and inappropriate social behavior in their peers. (Cratty, 1975) Handicapped pupils should be given this opportunity if at all possible, and not restricted for participating in lifetime sports and games.

In physical education not only are physical skills stressed but improvement in self-confidence, self-image and related psycho-social characteristics are developed despite disabilities. Interaction with others during physical education enhances emotional control and stability thus developing individuals capable of maintaining themselves in society without artificial aides or special services. (Singer and others, 1972) Many educators-physical education, special classroom and regular classroom teachers still view handicapped children with negative expectations based on what these teachers think cannot be accomplished by them. For example, generalizations are made that every child with handicapping conditions wants and needs some type of special or adapted physical education program. This

NEED AND PURPOSE CONT.

This philosophy and approach to meeting a handicapped child's needs are incomprehensible with PL 94-142 and PL 93-112 which mandate educational programs based on interests, needs, abilities and disabilities of every child. (Stein, 1979) Therefore, it is vital to distinguish between a child with real special physical or motor needs and a child who only needs some type of accommodations so as to be able to participate actively in regular education programs.

The purpose of placing a special education student in regular physical education classes is to help that pupil develop to his fullest potential. Regular physical education placement is validated when socialization and interaction with other students can occur when normally not possible or available in adapted physical education class.

PROCEDURES FOR MAINSTREAMING

The assessment of students is the responsibility of a professional who can evaluate psycho-motor skills in determining whether regular physical education placement is appropriate. The adapted physical education specialist (A.P.E.) is usually the person who has the training to evaluate and the public relations with the schools regular physical education staff. However, the special classroom teacher is quite capable of making the necessary contacts to implement the integration of her students. But, proper assessment of physical skills and emotional maturity in competitive sports and games should be done previous to all placement steps.

The assessment tools to be used should be left to the teachers discretion. Tests of fine and gross motor skills, if used, should offer an indication as to the level, age wise, of where the child stands. Nagel, Fait and Schurr have textbooks available that deal with content and method of elementary school phys-

PROCEDURES FOR MAINSTREAMING CONT.

cal education and include growth characteristics with levels of performance. Fitness tests are also good measurements of a students potential to perform adequately in a regular class situation. The best tool to use in evaluating whether a child is integratable enough is one that the teacher develops based on the requirements that are expected in regular physical education. (See evaluation chart at back of paper.)

It is important to emphasize that a student should not be pressured into a regular physical education class if his psycho-motor skills are questionable and he has no motivation toward the class. A student who is behind in fine and gross motor skills, especially in elementary grades, should acquire basic proficiencies before attempting integration. It is much more difficult to develop fine and gross motor skills as the pupil matures physically. Rushing a student will only create greater difficulties in acquiring abilities for team and recreational sports at the junior and senior high school levels. Advancing a student too quickly will also lower self confidence and create apprehension making the individual more conscience of his handicaps.

When determining what class or activity the handicapped student is to be placed in several factors should be considered. The handicapped student should have a special interest in the activity or game he is going into. This will motivate him to do well and increase the chances of a successful move on the teachers part. Some student whose overall skills would not be considered to be integratable, can often find success in activities where their interests lie. Capitalizing on interests not abilities or disabilities are therefore emphasized with most students. It is wrong to think a special education pupil will be lowest in a regular physical education class-often other students in that class could use adapted physcial education services but because of academic placement

PROCEDURES FOR MAINSTREAMING CONT.

have never been considered as needing special instruction. Therefore it is possible that the handicapped pupil will fit in a given class and be proficient enough in the skill or game through modeling or their own abilities to be very successful and not stand out because of disabilities.

Communication with the regular physical education teacher at the time of integration is a key step in establishing a successful environment for the student. Teachers must be carefully scrutinized before placing a special education student into their class. Many regular teachers do not have the patience or understanding to help a handicapped pupil gain success. Therefore it is essential that the A.P.E. teacher or special classroom teacher confer with the pupils new teacher and inform them of the students potential level and offer suggestions in helping the teacher feel comfortable and acceptant of their new pupil.

EVALUATION DURING MAINSTREAMING

This process necessitates appropriate communication, cooperation and coordination between A.P.E. special classroom and regular physical education teachers. The integrated student should be visually observed at least once the first week by the classroom or A.P.E. teacher. The regular P.E. teacher should be contacted at the end of the first week to further discuss the students social-emotional behavior and skill potential. At all times an open line of communication should exist so that the regular P.E. instructor can immediately contact someone if the need arises.

Visually after the initial introduction into a regular P.E. class a handicapped student, who has been properly screened and placed, will adjust naturally to his new class. After a three week period the pupils' supervising teacher should contact the regular teacher to informally check on their progress. If this second check is appropriate, written contacts can be used for further checks.

EVALUATION DURING MAINSTREAMING CONT.

Questions regarding student behavior, skill progress and other pertinent information should be included in the questionnaire. (See Questionnaire at back.)

The student should also be included in the evaluation process. Informal questioning directed to the student will help them with understanding their integration experience and increase self confidence in their new class. Teacher support will help eliminate many of the fears and problems a handicapped student might experience in the regular P.E. setting.

The total evaluation practice should be an ongoing process as long as the child stays in regular physical education class. Through continued monitoring the handicapped students mainstreaming experience will be successful and all teachers and specialists involved will meet the demands of P.L. 94-142.

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ASSESSMENT EVALUATION FOR P.E. INTEGRATION

1. AGE APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL SKILLS (EVALUATED FOR 1 ACTIVITY OR TOTAL SKILLS)
2. WILLINGNESS TO DRESS AND PARTICIPATE DAILY (ESPECIALLY IN JR. & SR. HIGH SCHOOL P.E.)
3. COMPREHENDS SPOKEN LANGUAGE, CARRIES OUT DIRECTIONS (DOES PUPIL HAVE LANGUAGE DISORDER?)
4. COMPREHENDS WRITTEN DIRECTIONS AND NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION (WILL LOW ACADEMIC ABILITIES PREVENT SUCCESS?)
5. MATURITY LEVEL/SOCIALIZATION SKILLS APPROPRIATE FOR AGE (ESPECIALLY EM, LDC, SLD/A STUDENTS)
6. WILL STUDENT BE MOTIVATED BY REGULAR P.E. CLASS OR ACTIVITY (WILLINGNESS TO BE INTEGRATED)
7. IS SELF CONFIDENCE HIGH ENOUGH TO ACCEPT REGULAR P.E. (CAN HE ACCEPT FAILURE AS LEARNING?)
8. WILL STUDENT HANDLE COMPETITIVE SITUATIONS SUCCESSFULLY (ESPECIALLY JR. HIGH SCHOOL)
9. CAN STUDENT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR A COMBINATION LOCK (IMPORTANT FACTOR IN UPPER GRADES)
10. DOES PUPIL DISABILITY ALLOW FOR SUCCESS IN ACTIVITY OR SPORT INTEGRATED INTO (IMPORTANT FACTOR, EXPERIENCE, ADAPTABILITY)

USE CHECK, NUMERAL RATING FOR TOTALING INTEGRABLE CHARACTERISTICS

QUESTIONNAIRE TO REGULAR P.E. TEACHER

(EXAMPLE)

NAME _____

1. IS STUDENT FULFILLING YOUR REQUIREMENTS?

2. WHAT IS THEIR PRESENT GRADE? _____

3. DO THEY APPEAR TO BE SOCIALLY ADJUSTING TO THE CLASS SETTING?

4. ARE THERE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THE PUPIL THAT SHOULD BE NOTED AND DO YOU WISH TO HAVE A MEETING WITH THE A.P.E. TEACHER OR CLASSROOM TEACHER REGARDING THEIR PERFORMANCE?

5. DO YOU RECOMMEND CONTINUED PLACEMENT IN YOUR CLASS OR ANOTHER REGULAR P.E. CLASS?

